

Trends in Public Relations – May, 2010
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Social Media Exhaustion (SME)

- Business owners, consumers, and even PR professionals are expressing feeling exhausted and overwhelmed by social media.
- According to Jess Flynn, president of Red Sky Public Relations, SME is even a diagnosed illness.
- The exhaustion – expressed or diagnosed – is likely due to the overwhelming amount of information that gets shared on sites like Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook, every second of every day.
- While many businesses and groups are using social media channels responsibly and putting forth genuine efforts to engage with and listen to consumers, many others are simply adding to the ‘ground noise’ by sending out one-way, self-promotional messaging. Not only does this add to the social media chaos, many social media users (consumers) don’t appreciate this sort of communication. It’s not why they use social media and so they stop listening. Most of them immediately.

The end of Gatekeepers

- The idea that you (a business owner, CEO, PR professional, or director) have control over how consumers perceive you, what they know about you, and what media and consumers say about you is a misperception.
- Today, anyone can create media. Consumers love this and thrive on it. Social media didn’t explode as a trend overnight. It grew into a huge media form because it’s popular with consumers. It gives them control. And they do and will say whatever they please about your company/group/or even you as a person.
- At the same time, the media landscape has and is changing. PR and marketing professionals outnumber journalists. It’s becoming harder to earn traditional publicity and thus control the message.

Social Media

- Social media allows businesses/groups/individuals to share their own message. Moreover, it allows leaders to listen to consumers, learn what they want, understand their values/perceptions/needs/desires, and to engage with those consumers based on that knowledge.
- Social media allows businesses to create their own messages and empower their brand ambassadors to “spread the good word.”
- There are 400 million + active users on Facebook. Huge group of consumers online in “one place.” Can’t and shouldn’t be ignored
- Social media allows for niche marketing

Acquisition vs. Activation

- 1,000 fans who aren’t really interested in your product vs. 10 fans who are ‘brand ambassadors

- Goal must be to learn from, empower, activate and reward the 10 fans; then to grow 10 more
- It's not quality over quantity – it's a million disinterested fans vs. a few highly interested fans
- Genuine intentions are reciprocated online

Engage

- Fans, followers and “friends” on social media are simply people on the other side of the screen. Talk to them as if you would talk to a customer in your very own store/restaurant/hotel/business. Value them accordingly.
- Converse.
- Ask open-ended questions that will help you learn more about your fans.
- Reciprocate: if a fan/friend/follower/blogger – *anyone* gives you accolades or even mentions you online, respond in kind and in real time.

Transparency

- “Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.” Didn't work in Oz; doesn't work online.
- Let people know that it's the CEO/PR Specialist/Social Media Kid - whoever it may be – but that it's an actual person online generating the engaging, witty messaging.
- Be clear about the purpose of the Twitter feed/blog/media channel; let consumers know how they should engage and why.

Your Company as a Media Company

- As aforementioned, media landscapes are shifting. Businesses have the opportunity to create their own media – from feature story-style blog posts, to videos, to images, and spread them throughout media channels online.
- No one knows your company's story better than you and your employees. Empower your internal publics (possibly your most powerful asset) to be brand ambassadors.
- If budgets permit, create the role of Online Community Manager or PR/Digital Publisher for an internal employee (1-2).

Social Media Optimization

- In a recent Brian Solis Webinar, Solis shared that some 40% of all online searches are conducted IN Facebook. Meaning, instead of using Google or Bing, online consumers are either already in or they go to Facebook and they conduct a search.
- The result? Facebook has enhanced its search function.
- In turn, Google is incorporating live social feeds, content and objects into search results. This means that, if you're producing relevant, keyword-rich content about “cogs for relationships” on your social media channels, and someone searches for “cogs for relationships,” both your website and your social media content will be returned in search results.
- To Do: Tag all images and videos with relevant keyword. Ensure all blog posts and image captions are keyword-rich as well.

Geolocation

- Everlater
- FourSquare
- GoWalla
- Facebook
- GeoCaching
- Platforms leading the geolocation trend; people are utilizing them to talk about where they are/what they're doing. Businesses can capitalize on these platforms to offer customers incentives for "checking" in, trying products and interacting.

On the Move

- Mobile marketing is exploding and will only continue to grow.
- Text message marketing & geo-fencing are growing trends

Shared Journey

- Consumers like sharing their experiences and recommendations, especially in travel, on sites like Everlater, IGoUGo.com, TripAdvisor.com, etc.
- Access to computers or wireless Internet is key to uploading and sharing info; travel-related businesses must provide these services.

Reward Loyalty

- Give brand ambassadors, fans, and consumer's accolades. Let them know, publicly, that you appreciate them.
- Sweepstakes. People love the prospect of winning; and they love free even more.
- Rewarding fans/followers – reward social media connections with special deals or offers.

Collaborative

- Odds are there are people in your network who are trying to promote themselves via these channels too. Instead of seeing these people as a threat, see that they can be resources in that they are people to converse with online. Start the conversation – share and share alike.